



# NEWSLETTER

BRUNSWICK COUNTY HISTORICAL SOCIETY  
BOX 632, SHALLOTTE, NORTH CAROLINA

Vol. VI, No. 1

February 1966

## BELVEDERE PLANTATION

by R. V. Asbury, Editor

Belvedere Plantation is situated in Brunswick County and is nearly opposite the city of Wilmington, about the distance of two miles, but intervening is Eagles' Island formed by cut off; now called by some Brunswick River; however, in the early days, called the Northwest Branch of the Cape Fear River, the latter was then called the thoroughfare.

Colonel William Dry was perhaps one of the first owners of the piece of property. In later years his son-in-law, Benjamin Smith owned it and established it as his main residence. He had other plantations such as Blue Banks, and at one time Orton. Smith also built a three story brick building in Wilmington on Dock Street as a Town House.

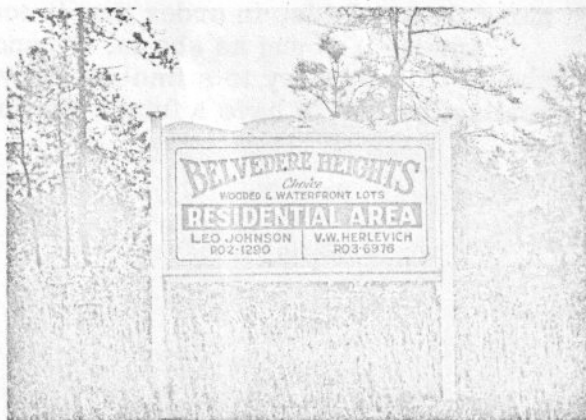
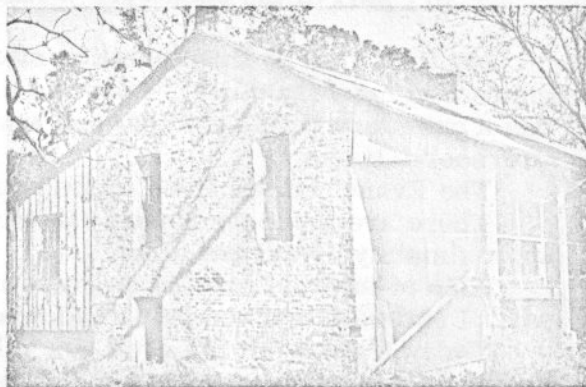
On Tuesday morning, April 26, 1796, President George Washington had breakfast at Belvedere with his old friend, who served under him during the war years. Smith was quite young when he served as aide-de-camp to General Washington in the dangerous but masterly retreat from Long Island after the defeat of the American Army in August 1776.

In 1783 he first appeared in the General Assembly of North Carolina, representing Brunswick County in the Senate. In December 1789 he donated to the University of North Carolina land warrants for some 20,000 acres of land, not only because he was a member of the Board of Trustees, but because of his interest in higher education. In honor of Benjamin Smith there was a building named Smith Hall. Smith was elected Governor of the State of North Carolina in 1810, and among his other accomplishments he served as Grand Master of the Order of Masons of North Carolina.

It is a coincidence that Daniel Russell later owned the Belvedere Plantation and also became Governor of the State of North Carolina in 1898.

An interesting "For Sale" notice appeared in the Cape Fear Recorder of Wilmington, North Carolina, on June 29, 1831, which read as follows:

My "Belvedere" plantation, formerly the residence of General Smith, on the Cape Fear River in North Carolina. It lies opposite to and in sight of, and two miles from Wilmington on the stage road leading



from Wilmington to Fayetteville and the road leading to Georgetown, S. C.

This plantation contains at least 200 acres of tide swamp, 160 acres of which are banked and ditched and now under cultivation. In fertility, I don't know that it is superior to other lands in the neighborhood but in every other respect it combines more advantages than any other rice plantation in this State. In the first place, it is situated precisely in that pitch of the tide which exempts it from the effects of the salt water and freshes, and it is also protected by woodlands adjoining, that my losses by storms have been very inconsiderable which renders a crop certain, let what will happen.

Last though not least, it is intersected by creeks in such a manner that it can be harvested in one third less time than it would otherwise require.

There are about nine hundred (900) acres of Pineland which is poor and will remain so forever, except some fifty (50) or sixty (60) acres perhaps which has a clay foundation, the rest would require manure every year and with such lands I never meddle.

It is well watered, having many good springs; and a well of as good and as cold water as can be found in the lower part of the country.

Improvement - On the premises are a comfortable and convenient two-story dwelling house and a building one and one half story with kitchen, wash house, stable, carriage house, smokehouse, etc. A barn, 110 feet long, 40 feet wide, two story's high in which is a threshing machine and other machinery. Also overseer's houses and kitchen, all of which buildings are of brick, put up in the most substantial manner.

There is another barn built of wood directly at the river from whence the rice can be conveniently thrown into a flat or vessel and any vessel that can come over the bar can come to the barn. I have endeavored to render as permanent as possible all the repairs and improvements. I think it is upon the whole the handsomest and most pleasant residence in this part of the country. The improvements were made with the expectation that it would be my chief residence all my life, but the state of my health requires that I should reside more permanently in a high and dry part of the country. William Watts Jones

My first visit to the plantation site was June 22, 1958, early in the morning. What I viewed impressed me very much. Only one brick building had survived through the years. This building was a one story with basement and a wooden addition to the rear. It is believed to have been the Overseer's house.

The Evans' family lived in the house for many years and were last there in 1947.

There are three enormous oak trees which lend shade and soft breezes to the site, and are approximately 200 years of age.

Also of interest are the ruins of a ballast stone building which had been damaged in some manner. I estimate that the ruins had some 2000 stones in it.

Today if you visit the area you will find a real estate company has put a road through the vicinity where the house once stood, and the property has been divided into lots.

I think it is truly sad that a real estate sign is the only marker which bears the name of the Plantation. I would like to see a marker erected by our Society or the State at some suitable spot along the roadside, in order that it could be viewed by the people of the County and visitors.

America, young as she is, depends on history made from the County and State levels. We should therefore try to stimulate the youth of the County to be aware of their heritage and the realization that to have a future one must be conscious of the past.



FEBRUARY MEETING  
OF  
BRUNSWICK COUNTY HISTORICAL SOCIETY

PLACE: NEW HOPE PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH  
WINNABOW, NORTH CAROLINA  
TIME: 8:00 O'CLOCK P. M.  
DATE: FEBRUARY 7, 1966

PAST PROGRAM

THE BRUNSWICK COUNTY HISTORICAL SOCIETY MET MONDAY, FEBRUARY 7, AT 8:00 P. M. AT THE NEW HOPE PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH IN WINNABOW. MR. WILLIAM G. FAULK, JR., HISTORIC SITE ASSISTANT AT BRUNSWICK TOWN, WAS OUR GUEST SPEAKER FOR THE OCCASION. HE SHOWED COLOR SLIDES ON THE WORK DONE AT BRUNSWICK TOWN SITE IN 1965 AND TOLD OF THE PROGRESS BEING MADE ON THE NEW MUSEUM BUILDING.

ELECTION OF OFFICERS

AT THE NOVEMBER MEETING OF THE SOCIETY THE NOMINATING COMMITTEE ANNOUNCED THAT THE PRESENT OFFICERS OF THE SOCIETY HAD BEEN RENOMINATED FOR THE COMING YEAR. THE FOLLOWING WERE UNANIMOUSLY RE-ELECTED FOR 1966:

MRS. MARIE H. ROURK, PRESIDENT  
MRS. JEANNETTE DRISCOLL, VICE PRESIDENT  
MISS HELEN TAYLOR, SECRETARY-TREASURER  
MRS. HARRY MINTZ, PROGRAM COMMITTEE  
MR. R. V. ASBURY, JR., DIRECTOR & EDITOR OF  
NEWSLETTER  
MRS. J. L. BLAKE, DIRECTOR  
MR. HARRY MINTZ, CHAIRMAN OF BRUNSWICK TOWN  
PRESERVATION COMMITTEE

NEWSLETTER NEEDS YOUR ASSISTANCE

THE NEWSLETTER IS YOUR PAPER AS A MEMBER OF THE SOCIETY. ANYONE WHO HAS INFORMATION CONCERNING OLD DOCUMENTS, PHOTOGRAPHS, ARTIFACTS (INDIAN AND COLONIAL) OR OTHER PERTINENT MATERIAL WHICH MIGHT BE USED IN THIS NEWSLETTER, PLEASE DO NOT HESITATE TO SEND THEM TO "NEWSLETTER", BRUNSWICK COUNTY HISTORICAL SOCIETY, P. O. BOX 22, WINNABOW, NORTH CAROLINA.

R. V. ASBURY, JR., EDITOR